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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [ASEC](#) [IV](#)  
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: GBAGBO GAMBLES WHILE THE POLITICAL  
PROCESS DRIFTS

REF: ABIDJAN 1402

Classified By: POL/ECON Jim Wojtasiewicz, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) As 2006 comes to an end, the Cote d'Ivoire peace process continues to drift. President Gbagbo is waiting for rebel FN (New Forces) leader Guillaume Soro to respond to the five "proposals" he unveiled December 20 (Reftel). The pro-opposition newspaper Le Patriote reported December 27 that Soro is planning to do so in a speech January 1.

¶2. (C) Gbagbo is no doubt also waiting for the international community's reaction to his proposals. As it happens, the most recent statement on Cote d'Ivoire by the President of the Security Council came out the day after Gbagbo announced his proposals. The statement was drafted before Gbagbo announced his proposals and doesn't directly address them, but it expresses strong support for Prime Minister Banny, UN Security Council Resolution 1721, and the International Working Group (IWG), all ignored under Gbagbo's proposals. A more direct reaction from the international community will no doubt come in the communique from the upcoming January 12 IWG meeting.

¶3. (C) There is also drift in the leadership of the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI). Though it has not been formally announced, it is widely known that the current Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Pierre Schori, is planning to leave his post. According to initial reports, Schori was to leave at the end of the year, but the privately-owned independent newspaper l'Inter reported December 28 that Schori would probably stay until the end of February.

¶4. (C) Meanwhile Prime Minister Banny is trying to press forward. He met December 27 with the judges who are charged with overseeing the identification process, and he is now reportedly aiming to re-launch identification next week. However, Banny's working group on restructuring the armed forces and integrating the FAFN (Armed Forces of the New Forces) and the FANCI (Armed Forces of Cote d'Ivoire) hit a snag December 19 when President Gbagbo's Republican Guard refused to allow FAFN officers into the Prime Minister's office to attend the group's second meeting. (The Prime Minister's office and the Presidential palace are located inside the same compound, guarded by the Republican Guard.)

¶5. (C) Comment. As we have noted before, the political process here is cyclical. We are at a very vulnerable point in this cycle. President Gbagbo has thrown down the gauntlet to the opposition and the international community. Domestically, he is gambling that he can drive a wedge between the political opposition and the rebel FN by enticing Soro into some power-sharing arrangement. However, the

bankruptcy and short-sightedness of his five proposals, especially the absence of any will to find a politically acceptable way to fairly and transparently identify the citizens and register them to vote, clearly indicate that Gbagbo has no plan for leading his nation out of its political crisis. Rather, Gbagbo seeks only to cling to power at all costs, and it is hard to imagine Soro joining him in this relentless downward spiral. Internationally, with a new UN Secretary General coming in, a new SRSG, South Africa joining the Security Council, and presidential elections in France not far off, perhaps Gbagbo is gambling that if he holds on a little longer he will gain a more sympathetic hearing from the international community. Once again, however, by turning his back on the international community and defying its efforts to help, while putting forward no realistic plan of his own, he is only underscoring that he is incapable of leading his country back to its rightful place in the international community. End Comment.  
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